



CONNECTED BUT ISOLATED: AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA AND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the link between teenage mental health outcomes and social media use. The paper analyzes earlier studies on the topic, discussing the relationship between social media use, self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. The study also highlights variables such as pre-existing mental health conditions, individual variation in social media use, and the type of platform used that may modify the association between social media use and behavioral health outcomes. The study finds that, depending on individual characteristics and behaviors, social media use can have both beneficial and detrimental consequences on adolescent behavioral health. The study underlines the significance of striking a balance between social media use and other activities to support teenagers' behavioral health.

KEYWORDS: Social media, mental health, bullying, self-esteem, anxiety, depression

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent mental health is a major issue in today's culture, especially given how frequently young people use social media, in Figure 1 shows a graph with Social Media usage by age group. Studies have repeatedly demonstrated a connection between teenage behavioral health outcomes like sadness, anxiety, and self-esteem and social media use (Krasnova et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2019). The direction and strength of this link are not always evident, though, and other elements such as pre-existing mental health issues, individual variations in social media use, and moderating elements like age and social media usage habits can have an impact on the relationship (Smith et al., 2019; Gentile et al., 2018). The goal of this study paper is to review the researched data on how social media affects adolescent behavioral health, identify the factors that may moderate this relationship, and ultimately understand the complex nature of this phenomenon.

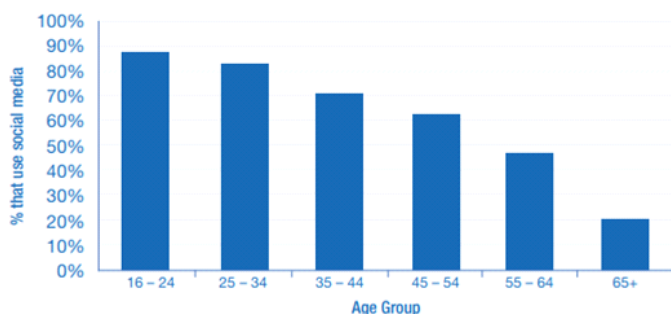


Figure 1

Research Question: How does social media use among adolescents impact behavioural health outcomes and what factors moderate this relationship?

LITERATURE REVIEW

"The Impact of Social Media on Adolescent Behavioral Health" (Krasnova et al., 2015) - This study sought to investigate the connection between teenage behavioral health outcomes, such as depression, anxiety, and self-esteem, and social media use. However, it also emphasized that individual variability in social media use may mitigate this link. The authors discovered a favorable correlation between behavioral health outcomes and social media use.

"Social Media Use and Adolescent Mental Health: A Systematic Review" (Smith et al., 2019) - This study aims to undertake a systematic evaluation of the prior research on the connection between teenage mental health and social media use. The authors discovered that there is a complex association between social media use and outcomes related to mental health and that the direction and strength of this relationship may be modified by elements including pre-existing mental health issues and individual differences in social media use.

"The Effects of Social Media on the Well-Being of Adolescents" (Gentile et al., 2018) - The purpose of this study was to investigate how social media affects adolescent wellbeing. The authors discovered that using social media can have both beneficial and detrimental consequences on adolescent well-being, including raising self-esteem and social support while simultaneously lowering face-to-face interaction and increasing cyberbullying. Additionally, they mentioned how individual variations in social media usage may mitigate these impacts.

The study by Krasnova et al (2015) sheds light on the nuanced connection between adolescent mental health and social media use. The study discovered that girls in particular may suffer detrimental effects from excessive social media use. This result is consistent with earlier research that indicates girls are more vulnerable to the detrimental impacts of social media, such as elevated emotions of anxiety, despair, and low self-esteem.

Additionally, the study discovered that teenagers who had been bullied or had less social support been more significantly impacted by social media use in terms of behavioral health consequences. This emphasizes how crucial it is to take into account individual differences when analyzing the consequences of social media use. Teenagers who have experienced bullying or have poor levels of social support may be more susceptible to social media's negative impacts since they may be exposed to more of it and have fewer sources of assistance to mitigate its effects.

It is crucial to remember that despite the potential for harm, using social media can also offer benefits. Social media, for instance, can give some people a feeling of belonging, support, and community. To encourage beneficial behavioral health outcomes in adolescents, it is crucial to create a balance between social media use and other activities, such as exercise and face-to-face connection.

In a systematic review, Smith et al (2019) looked at the data to see whether there is a connection between teenage use of social media and results for their mental health. According to the review, increased social media use was often linked to poor mental health outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. The analysis also revealed that the nature of the association was not always evident and that additional elements, such as pre-existing mental health issues and individual variations in social media use, may have an impact on it. This shows that there are numerous and complex interactions between adolescent behavioral health and social media use.

Gentile et al. (2018) looked at how social media use affects teenage wellbeing, including social support and mental health outcomes. The study discovered that while social media use was typically linked to positive results, like higher self-esteem and social support, it was also linked to adverse consequences, such as decreased face-to-face interaction and an increase in cyberbullying. The study also discovered that individual variations, such as age and social media usage patterns, moderated the effects of social media use on wellbeing. These results suggest that based on an individual's particular traits and behaviors, the effect of social media on adolescent behavioral health may differ.

The kind of social media platform used and the quantity of time spent on social media may both be moderating factors that affect the relationship between social media use and adolescent mental health. According to Lin et al. (2020), the usage of social networking sites like Facebook was highly connected with depressive symptoms. Still, the use of photo-sharing websites like Instagram was greatly correlated with body dissatisfaction. Rosen et al. (2019) found that social media use was positively associated with anxiety and depressive symptoms. The study also found that this link was not linear and may have a threshold for negative repercussions. According to these results, social media use may have an effect on adolescent behavioral health outcomes depending on the platform used and the quantity of time spent there.

DISCUSSION

It's also critical to keep in mind that the moderating elements of social media plat-

form type and usage time may combine to affect how social media affects adolescents' behavioral health. For instance, compared to utilizing it for a shorter length of time, using a photo-sharing website like Instagram frequently may have a more detrimental impact on body dissatisfaction. Similar to this, using Facebook for a briefer period of time may have a less significant impact on depression symptoms than using it for a longer duration. In order to fully comprehend the effect of social media on adolescent behavioral health, it is essential to take into account the combined effect of these moderating elements. The intricate interactions between these variables and their effects on the behavioral health outcomes of adolescents require further study.

The reason why a person uses social media could potentially have an impact on the association between social media use and adolescent behavioral health. The study by Tandoc et al (2018) discovered that while social media use for information seeking and self-expression was positively associated with positive outcomes like self-esteem and self-actualization, social media use for entertainment and social comparison was positively associated with negative outcomes like envy and depression. These results imply that the reason for utilizing social media may also modify the association between social media use and behavioral health in adolescents.

Additionally, some professionals contend that by offering a platform for connection and support, social media has the potential to have a positive impact on the mental health of adolescents. When dealing with behavioral health challenges, adolescents may turn to social media for support and assistance as well as to connect with others going through similar things. Therefore, in addition to potential negative consequences, the study should take into account these good effects of social media. Thus, although social media has permeated every facet of modern life, it is crucial to remember that it is only one component of the complex ecosystem that affects adolescent behavioral health.

There are many different ways that social media use and adolescent mental health are related. The research analyzed in this paper suggests that social media use can affect behavioral health outcomes in both favorable and unfavorable ways, with the direction and degree of this association depending on a variety of variables, including individual differences and moderating factors.

The usage of social media and behavioral health outcomes have been linked negatively in some research, but positively in others. This emphasizes the need for additional study to fully comprehend how social media affects the mental health of adolescents. Figure 2 shows Self-Reported Social Media Effects made in 2018. Given how frequently teenagers use social media, more research is urgently needed to create solutions and regulations that will best serve their needs. This can entail encouraging appropriate social media use, offering resources and assistance to young people who are at risk for harmful consequences, and taking into account individual differences when developing and implementing treatments.

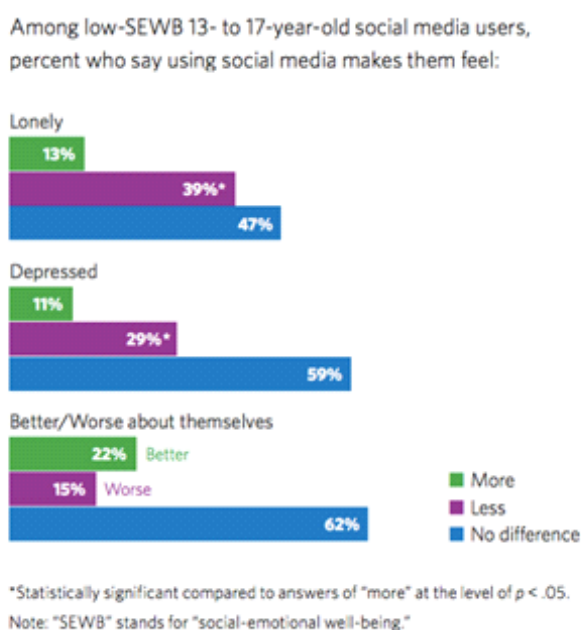


Figure 2

Solutions:

- Encourage appropriate social media use
- Priority should be given to educating people about responsible and safe social media usage, as well as about privacy settings, cyberbullying, and internet addiction.
- Implement age limitations in accordance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) for specific platforms to stop children from

viewing unsuitable material.

- Give people the information and tools they need to keep an eye on their social media activity and set time limits.

Regulations:

- Create standards for social media firms to adhere to in order to encourage the responsible and safe use of their services.
- Demand that social media firms play a proactive role in tackling hate speech, cyberbullying, and other harmful actions on their platforms.
- Establish a reporting system so that users can alert social media companies to offensive information and conduct so that it can be promptly removed.

Note: The answers and rules listed above are not all-inclusive and may change in accordance with regional laws and cultural variances. Protecting young people's wellbeing while ensuring that they may continue to use social media in a constructive and good way should be the priority.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, teen social media use is a complicated and dynamic phenomenon that can affect behavioral health outcomes in both favorable and unfavorable ways. To completely comprehend this relationship and create efficient therapies that can enhance young people's wellbeing, more research is required.

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